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ABSTRACT

This position paper identifies the purposes and underlying rationale of the middle school, outlines what the middle school program should be--curricular, instructional, and organizational-administrative, and presents some leadership implications. It is assumed that if educators understand the root causes of transescent behavior, they will deal more rationally and sanely with that behavior. The characteristics of transescent physical, intellectual and mental, and personality growth are presented as the rationales for specific recommendations and program implications. These recommendations and implications are designed to improve teaching and learning. The recommendations are intended as general guidelines and, while most will have relevance for all school districts in the United States, their interpretation into more specific program implications may reflect certain factors or nuances indigenous to individual districts. The suggested implications that follow the recommendations are presented to illustrate various program alternatives The problems that must be met by middle school leaders--administratirs, supervisors, state departments, universities, and professional organizations--in order to accomplish the middle school outlined are also dealt with. (Author/IRT)

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The Middle School We Need

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A Report from the ASCD Working Group on the Emerging Adolescent Learner

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Foreword

In 1961, the ASCD Commission on Secondary Curriculum published a paper for the Association, *The Junior High School We Need*. That report was an effort to clarify the purposes and programs in the junior high school.

In 1969 a Council on the Emerging Adolescent Learner was established by ASCD. That council was followed by formal and informal Working Groups until 1974 when the present Working Group on the Middle School and Emerging Adolescent Learner was appointed by the Executive Council of ASCD. The ASCD Executive Council charged the 1974 Working Group with developing a paper for the Association identifying the rationale and significance of the American middle school and stressing the kinds of programs appropriate for emerging adolescent learners.

We offer the present report to our professional colleagues interested in the education of emerging adolescent learners in the middle school years.

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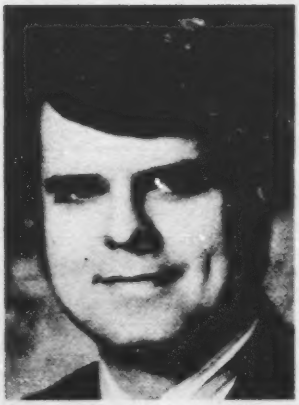

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Introduction

In terms of numbers and recognition, the middle school has arrived. From its modest beginnings in the early 1950's and 1960's through its incredible growth in numbers in the mid- and later 60's and the early 70's, the middle school has been one of the most remarkable phenomena in the history of American education. Only in the past two years or so has there been a slowing in the increase in numbers of middle schools, which have grown at a geometric rate every two years since 1965. Thus, the maiden voyage of the middle school as a name and as a grade organization is nearing an end. As it lies in port the vessel must be outfitted for its next journey, one that will be much more arduous and lengthy because certain questions and problems loom as barrier reefs:

—What are the identifying purposes, indeed the underlying rationale, for the existence of the American middle school?

—What should its programs be—curricular, instructional, and organizational-administrative?

If answers are not forthcoming to these questions, the middle school may flounder, remaining little more than a name and an assemblage of grades, with little else to identify and distinguish it.

On the first question, the middle school is designed for

students who are making the transition from childhood to adulthood. A prime consideration is the role of youth in the peer group and society. With these concepts in mind, the middle school seeks to make education relevant to the needs and interests of the individual as a transescent,[1] to allow the individual to develop a realization of self, and to achieve a measure of control over his or her own existence. Therefore, the middle school should be an institution which has:

1. A unique program adapted to the needs of the pre- and early adolescent student.

2. The widest possible range of intellectual, social, and physical experiences.

3. Opportunities for exploration and development of fundamental skills needed by all while making allowances for individual learning patterns. It should maintain an atmosphere of basic respect for individual differences.

4. A climate that enables students to develop abilities, find facts, weigh evidence, draw conclusions, determine values, and that keeps their minds open to new facts.

5. Staff members who recognize and understand the student's needs, interests, backgrounds, motivations, goals, as well as stresses, strains, frustrations, and fears.

6. A smooth educational transition between the elementary school and the high school while allowing for the physical and emotional changes taking place due to transescence.

7. An environment where the child, not the program, is most important and where the opportunity to succeed is ensured for all students.

[1] Donald H. Eichhorn. *The Middle School*. New York: The Center for Applied Research in Education, Inc., 1966. p. 3. "Transescence is the stage of development which begins prior to the onset of puberty and extends through the early stages of adolescence. Since puberty does not occur for all precisely at the same chronological age in human development, the transescent designation is based on the many physical, social, emotional, and intellectual changes in body chemistry that appear prior to the time which the body gains a practical degree of stabilization over these complex pubescent changes."

8. Guidance in the development of mental processes and attitudes needed for constructive citizenship and the development of lifelong competencies and appreciations needed for effective use of leisure.

9. Competent instructional personnel who will strive to understand the students whom they serve and develop professional competencies which are both unique and applicable to the transescent student.

10. Facilities and time which allow students and teachers an opportunity to achieve the goals of the program to their fullest capabilities.

Most middle school educators can generally agree upon such broad philosophical purposes as an underlying rationale. Yet believing on the one hand and doing on the other are two separate entities. How successful have middle schools been in translating philosophy into practice? How well have they answered our other question, which pertains more to the actual practices, the day-to-day operations of existing schools?

The available research indicates a significant gap between the main tenets of the theoretical middle school concept proposed by leading middle school authorities and actual educational practices in most middle schools. It appears that many middle schools have adopted the educational programs and practices of junior highs, thus not successfully achieving the middle school concept. The junior high school, although its philosophy from the time of its inception in the early 1900's was almost identical to the present espoused philosophy of the middle school, has long been criticized for being too much a true "junior" to the senior high school. Many alleged characteristics of the senior high have "contaminated" the junior high—a departmentalized subject-matter curriculum, interscholastic athletics, sophisticated early socialization activities, and college and vocational preparation.[2] And now it appears that many middle schools have continued these same sins by

[2] It is interesting to note that the earlier ASCD booklet, *The Junior High School We Need*, pointed out many of the same problems existing at the time of the publication in 1961.

simply moving the junior high's structure, program, and schedule down a grade or two. Or, the programs of grades 5 and 6 from the elementary school and those of grades 7 and/or 8 from the junior high are maintained so that, in reality, two very different schools are housed in the same building. Thus, it should come as no surprise that the only real differences between many middle schools and junior highs have been in name and grade organization.

The Foundation of The Middle School Program: The Emergent Adolescent Learner

Any educator who has worked in a middle school or junior high for a day becomes well aware of the symptoms of transescent behavior, but too few are cognizant of or understand their root causes. As a result, many educators tend to perceive the perfectly normal and natural day-to-day characteristics of transescents as "discipline problems" and treat them as such. The results of this misunderstanding are often found in the strict forms of discipline, order, control, and formality that many early adolescent learners endure. Too many teachers glue students to their chairs for torturous lengths of time, use a lecture method of instruction, expect absolute attentiveness, and then punish those who cannot conform. Few transescents can conform; it is simply not in their physical, social, and emotional nature.

It is reasonable to assume that if educators understand the root causes of transescent physical, mental, and social behavior, then they will deal more rationally and sanely with the characteristic symptoms. We now present some of those root causes and symptoms as the rationale for specific recommendations and program implications. These recommendations and implications should improve teaching and learning experiences for middle school educators and early adolescent learners in

existing programs, as well as those currently in development, or planned for the future. The "Recommendations" are intended as general guidelines.

While most of the "Recommendations" will have relevance for all school districts in the United States, their interpretation into more specific program implications may reflect certain factors or nuances indigenous to individual school districts. For example, an inner-city middle school's students might possess problems quite different from those of a middle school in a suburban setting. The specific curricular and instructional implications of the two schools might vary to reflect these differences, but both would remain consistent in their adherence to a set of overall recommendations in line with the middle school concept.

The "Suggested Implications for Middle School Programs" which follow the "Recommendations" are presented more to illustrate various program alternatives than to prescribe or to represent comprehensively all of the program elements the "Recommendations" may require.

Physical Growth Characteristics

Rationale

In transescence a period of pronounced and accelerated physical development commences, marked by increasing height, body breadth and depth, heart size, lung capacity, and muscular strength. Transescents grow at varying rates of speed and begin their rapid growth at different ages. The growth pattern usually is the same for all boys and girls, but there are wide variations in the timing and degree of changes. The sequence begins between ages 8 to 12 in girls, between 9 to 13 in boys, and ends between ages 15 to 18 in girls and 17 to 20 in boys. Girls develop faster than boys. A 13-year-old girl is closer to being a woman than a 13-year-old boy is to being a man. Boys tend to lag a year or two behind girls in the physical growth cycle. However, the sequential order in which development occurs is relatively consistent in each sex. The age of greatest variability in physical size and physiological develop-

ment is about 13. These growth patterns make transescence unique when compared with any other age level.

Interest patterns tend to follow physical changes, although size and maturity do not necessarily proceed together. The incommensurate growth of heart and body may result in functional heart murmurs. Bone growth often is faster than muscle development, and bones may lack the protection of covering muscles and supporting tendons. The bones are quite susceptible to damage in the epiphyseal areas of growth during intense sports competition. This uneven bone-muscle growth also results in lack of coordination; poor body mechanics are evident in many students. A wide range of individual physical differences among students in prepubertal and pubertal stages of development appears.

Transescents are characterized by extreme restlessness and need to have a daily release of physical energy. They may feel that they have unlimited sources of energy and unlimited resistance, but they tire easily and are reluctant to admit it. The tendency to overexert may result in chronic fatigue.

The acceleration and unevenness of physical development and physiological change in transescence have many emotional and psychological side effects. Transescents are likely to be disturbed by awkwardness resulting from disproportionate changes in weight and muscle development and are sensitive to the changing contours of the body. They have difficulty in accepting the changes in their own bodies and in realizing that peers may develop differently also; that each individual is unique. The variety of growth patterns frequently engenders anxiety about the normality of one's own development; deviations from cultural models of physical efficiency and physical attractiveness tend to upset both boys and girls.

Slowness of development is a particular cause for concern. The girl asks herself why her breasts are not developing. The boy is worried because his genitals have not grown as much as those of the other boys he knows. Shortness or tallness, crooked teeth, acne, obesity, and many other physical characteristics also cause great worry. It is a rare youngster who is never worried during this period with the question: "Am I normal?"

Recommendations

The middle school should provide:

1. A program for the emerging adolescent that is adapted to the ever-changing physical needs of this learner.

2. Opportunities for interaction among students of differing age and physical development.

3. Instruction related to growth of the body so that one can better understand changes in himself or herself and in others and be prepared for future changes and problems. Students should be reassured that they are "normal" even if their pattern of development is not that of the average person.

4. Activities in physical education, sports, and student activities that are appropriate to levels of maturity, regardless of age, so that students are not pressured to overextend beyond their physical capabilities.

5. Teachers who are aware of the developmental characteristics and tasks of transescence.

6. A program for identifying students' physical limitations and enlisting the help of medical authorities in cases requiring follow-up attention.

7. A curriculum modified to avoid undue stress on transescents.

Possible Implications for Middle School Programs

1. Classroom experiences, orientation sessions, and discussion periods should be provided that will develop an understanding of physical growth and stress the normality of variability. Students should be encouraged to ask for information and assurance with respect to their physical development.

2. Guidance should be provided by teachers in the classroom on growth and development matters with guidance counselors employed as resource persons.

3. A carefully planned program of sex education, developed in collaboration with parents, the medical profession, and competent community agencies should be offered.

4. Periodic physical examinations should be conducted so that students may be placed in physical education classes according to physical capacity as well as achievement.

5. Physical education classes and student activities should provide for individual differences by grouping students according to differing abilities and physical characteristics.

6. The physical education program should develop both small and large muscle groups, and emphasize learning fundamentals of movement and building a foundation of physical fitness.

7. The physical education program should offer a wide variety of activities, including individual sports that carry over into recreational hours.

8. A variety of sports activities requiring skill and strength should be offered so that each student has a chance to achieve, and should minimize contests based on physical achievement, development, or experience. All students should have an opportunity to participate in physical activities at levels of their physical abilities and skills in programs which do not overemphasize interscholastic sport competition.

9. Where an interscholastic sports program exists, the number of games should be limited and most of them should be held in the afternoon, after school hours. Admission should be free. Travel distances should be short. Boosters' clubs should be discouraged, publicity minimized, and awards deemphasized. League championships and tournaments should not be permitted. An intramural program should receive higher priority and emphasis so that all interested students may be included.

10. The school should provide time for daily exercise, or a place where students can "be children" by playing and being noisy for short periods of time.

11. The school should guard against overexertion by teaching the student to recognize his or her limits of endurance and by supervision of activities.

12. Equipment and facilities within the school plant

should be planned and designed with the physical growth characteristics of transescents in mind.

13. Where appropriate, criteria of physical development should be employed in grouping middle school students for instructional purposes.

14. School health examinations should be given and health records kept. A nurse should be available on a full-time basis for first aid and as a resource for teachers.

Mental and Intellectual Growth Characteristics

Rationale

Mental growth is concurrent with physical maturation. Around the onset of pubescence, most transescents begin to develop the ability to carry out formal as well as concrete intellectual operations. The stage of formal operations is the final stage of intellectual development preparatory to adult thinking. This stage's main property is the ability to deal not only with the real, but also with the possible and the abstract. The student can begin to hypothesize and can go beyond what might be—that which may be discovered to be true. A high degree of intellectual curiosity also is generally characteristic of this developmental stage.

The cognitive maturation of transescents is highly variable from one student to another, thus calling for individualized curriculum experiences. They display a very wide range of skills, interests, and abilities unique to their developmental pattern.

They prefer active involvement to passive recipiency. Intellectual activity is especially interesting when related to their immediate goals or purposes. They tend to be intellectually uninhibited. They like to discuss some of their experiences with adults, have a tremendous potential range of creative expression and appreciation in the arts and humanities, and can evaluate rather critically.

Students desire a better understanding of their individual abilities, have a strong desire for approval, and are easily discouraged if they do not achieve.

Transescents can see relationships among similar concepts and experiences and make inferences therefrom. They can understand that elements of their environment and being are, or may be, interrelated. From this the student can perceive that each learning experience contributes toward a new and satisfying unity of knowledge.

Middle school students are capable of exploring and selecting learning materials and experiences on their own. To an increasing degree they can be trusted to assume personal responsibility for their own learning, independent of external means of teacher control.

Recommendations

The middle school should provide:

1. Learning experiences for transescents at their own intellectual levels, relating to immediate rather than remote academic goals.

2. A wide variety of cognitive learning experiences to account for the full range of students who are at many different levels of concrete and formal operations. Learning objectives should be sequenced to allow for the transition from concrete to formal operations.

3. A diversified curriculum of exploratory and/or fundamental activities resulting in daily successful experiences that will stimulate and nurture intellectual development.

4. Opportunities for the development of problem-solving skills, reflective-thinking processes, and awareness for the order of the student's environment.

5. Cognitive learning experiences so structured that students can progress in an individualized manner. However, within the structure of an individualized learning program, students can interact with one another. Social interaction is not an enemy of individual learning.

6. A curriculum in which all areas are taught to reveal opportunities for further study, to help students learn how to study, and to help them appraise their own interests and talents. In addition, the middle school should continue the develop-

mental program of basic skills instruction started in the elementary school, with emphasis upon both developmental and remedial reading.

7. A planned sequence of concepts in the general education areas, major emphasis on the interests and skills for continued learning, a balanced program of exploratory experiences and other activities and services for personal development, and appropriate attention to the development of values.

8. A common program in which areas of learning are combined and integrated to break down artificial and irrelevant divisions of curriculum content. Some previously departmentalized areas of the curriculum should be combined and taught around integrative themes, topics, and experiences. Other areas of the curriculum, particularly those concerned with basic skills which are logical, sequential, and analytical, might best be taught in ungraded or continuous progress programs. Inflexible student scheduling, with its emphasis upon departmentalization, should be restructured in the direction of greater flexibility.

9. Encouragement of personal curiosity, with one learning experience inspiring subsequent activities.

10. Methods of instruction involving open and individually directed learning experiences. The role of the teacher should be more that of a personal guide and facilitator of learning than of a purveyor of knowledge. Traditional lecture-recitation methods should be minimized.

11. Grouping criteria which involve not only cognitive, but also physical, social, and emotional criteria.

12. As much consideration for who the student is and becomes, his or her self-concept, self-responsibility, and attitudes toward school and personal happiness, as for how much and what he or she knows.

13. Experiences in the arts for all transescents to foster aesthetic appreciations and to stimulate creative expression.

14. Curriculum and teaching methods which reflect cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic subgroups within the middle school student population.

Possible Implications for Middle School Programs

1. Individualized instruction should be provided so that the student can proceed successfully at his or her own pace and level of ability without undue competitive pressures. The staff of the middle school should discuss the findings of various tests with students and guide their pursuits to nurture individual abilities.

2. To meet the widely varying intellectual development characteristics of transescents, the middle school should make available learning activities which embrace a broad range of modes—reading; writing; listening; making and doing. Learning materials should represent a wide variety of media—books; magazines; newspapers; audiovisual tapes, cassettes, recordings, filmstrips and films; simulation games; maps; pictures; and commercial materials for individualization. Each learning activity and material should be as student-directed and as free of teacher domination as possible.

3. Students, with the teacher serving as a guide and resource person, should be free to make activity choices and work at their own independent rates.

4. To compensate for students' varying attention and interest spans, provision should be made in the classroom for many opportunities for varied activity-oriented and short-term learning experiences.

5. Where appropriate, previously departmentalized facets of the curriculum should be combined and taught around integrative theme curriculum units. Typical units are based upon contemporary problems such as ecology and the community, philosophical-analytical concerns of the age group such as "Who Am I?" and physical growth changes, and historical-national-regional studies such as "The Civil War," "Canada," and "The Southern United States." These units may be taught either by individual teachers or by teams of teachers working with groups of students in a block-of-time scheduling arrangement. For example, a team composed of one English, one science, one social studies, and one mathematics teacher may be assigned 120 students for a four-hour block of time. A

combination of integrative theme unit instruction as well as departmentalized instruction could be employed. Interdisciplinary teaming or block-time instruction helps students make the transition from the single-teacher classroom of the elementary school to the more departmentalized classrooms of the high school.

6. The student's imaginative talent and need for self-expression can be fulfilled in compositions and projects in music, art, and social studies.

7. To assist students in their quest for personal identity and self-expression, exploratory, enrichment programs built around students' hobbies and interests should be a part of the formal curriculum program of the middle school.

8. Aesthetic components of the curriculum, such as art and music, should be considered basic ingredients of the middle school program and not be treated as "frills."

Personality Development Characteristics

Personality development is an important part of the emerging adolescent's transition from childhood to adolescence. The educative process preceding, during, and following the middle school years should ensure continuous progress in this phase of life. Intellectual, physical, and personality development all are important ingredients that need constant attention.

Personality development embraces those areas that pertain to the individual's interaction with his or her social milieu. Four major domains of social-emotional development are: (a) self-concept, (b) sex role identification, (c) peer influence, and (d) emotional control. Other features such as valuing, dependence-independence, role playing, peer pressures, and socialization would be more specific parts of the total picture and incorporated in the four spheres mentioned.

Rationale

Self-Concept. During the transition from childhood to adulthood the emerging adolescent develops a self-image. "How do I look in the eyes of others?" and "How do I look in my own eyes?" are questions continuously felt by the individual. These

are important to emerging adolescents as they assess themselves, endeavoring to present a positive image for their peer group. Conformity is high at this particular age level as peer acceptance is a dominant concern.

During this time of life the emerging adolescent begins to find the "me" as opposed to the "not me." The conflict between dependence *versus* independence in the family structure deepens as the individual commences to leave childhood and enter adulthood. Parents and other adults have difficulty in understanding why the young individual fluctuates between interests. Personal appearance, attitude expressed toward family and other adults, acceptance by peers and adults, all have their impact upon the individual's self-concept.

Sex Role Identification. As emerging adolescents formulate a self-concept they also encounter what it means to be a male or female. At this time an individual learns to feel, think, and act in a role congruent with his or her sex. Although sex roles are changing, certain types of behavior are still associated with a particular sex. To identify one's own sex role and the behavior inherent in the role is a major task for the emerging adolescent.

Peer Acceptance. Perhaps for no age group other than the emerging adolescent is there greater concern for peer acceptance by an individual. To be socially accepted by the peer group epitomizes many individuals' total behavior pattern. The will of the group often determines an individual's response to others outside the group, thus the indifference some exhibit to the adult population, especially teachers and parents.

Changing needs, interests, desires, and wishes all present a variety of problems concerning "with whom" the emerging adolescent should associate, and there is a continuous shift in friends. Peer pressures are at peak levels during developing stages for the early adolescent.

Emotional Turmoil. The emerging adolescent learners' emotional behavior fluctuates rapidly from amiable and content to aggressive, belligerent, and argumentative. At times the transescent is cheerful, affectionate, timid, or worried; at other times hurt, sad, jealous, or competitive. Anger may be intense,

and recovery takes longer than when he or she was a younger child.

Emotional development of the emerging adolescent, if plotted on a graph, would have many peaks and valleys. Attitude toward school may be very enthusiastic or show resilient resistance. Coping with physical changes, endeavoring to gain independence from family and becoming a person in his or her own right, and learning to manage a new mode of intellectual functioning—all these present emotion-laden problems of adjustment during this transitional era. At no other time in life is an individual likely to encounter such a diverse number of problems simultaneously.

Recommendations

The middle school should provide:

1. A curriculum that deals with the social-emotional needs of the preadolescent learner.

2. Arrangements for close, cooperative efforts among all the participants—learner, parent, and teacher.

3. Administrative arrangements to ensure that personality development has continuity both in breadth and in depth. Thus continuous, cooperative curriculum planning is essential among elementary, middle, and secondary school personnel.

4. A comprehensive, integrated series of learning encounters to assist learners to develop a self which they realize, accept, and approve.

5. Concrete approaches to learning as a needed foundation for the more abstract thinking they are beginning to demonstrate.

6. Classroom instruction, counseling, and extra-class activities that take into account the social-emotional needs of transescents.

7. An approach in working with emerging adolescents that will have consistency with basic democratic principles. Teaching-learning situations based on respect for others will provide the surroundings conducive to positive individual personality development.

Possible Implications for Middle School Programs

1. The middle school should provide a curriculum that is flexible in scope and sequence in order to meet the divergent needs of emerging adolescents. Highly structured departmentalized programs meet the needs of only a few students in specialized content or skill areas.

2. A greater array of socializing experiences through social activities, group work, and other formal and informal situations should be made available for this young learner.

3. Middle school programs should provide experiences in sharing, in accepting responsibility, and in self-direction.

4. Continuous in-service education is needed by middle school staff within the areas of learner personality development.

5. Teacher-pupil planning should be developed for more learner participation in the total teaching-learning encounter.

6. Strong middle school guidance-counseling services are needed to help emerging adolescents adjust socially to their environments.

7. Grouping practices should be flexible in order to satisfy the desires, interests, goals, wants, of the emerging adolescent.

8. Competitive sports should be de-emphasized in the middle school and more attention directed toward programs of intramural sports where all levels of abilities are accepted. Intramural competition better meets personal development objectives for emerging adolescents.

9. To meet the personality development needs of learners in larger school populations schools should: (a) reorganize total pupil enrollment into smaller groups by perhaps a "house plan"; (b) arrange greater contact with the same teacher over a longer period of time, especially for the new students in the middle school; and (c) assist the learner in adjusting to the transition process between elementary, middle, and secondary levels.

10. All middle school teachers should fill a counseling role. This may be approached by home-base groups, teacher advisor arrangements, and informal-formal contacts within and outside of classroom instruction.

Leadership Implications for Effective Middle School Programs

What kinds of teachers and administrators are required in middle schools?

How can state departments of education, universities and professional organizations ensure quality programs in middle schools?

What should be the relationship between the community and the middle school?

To accomplish the type of middle school program implied in the foregoing section of this position paper, certain problems necessarily fall into the laps of the middle school leaders—administrators, supervisors, state departments, universities, and professional organizations.

What Kinds of Teachers and Administrators Are Required in Middle Schools?

The middle school teacher, more than any other factor, holds the key to realization of the type of effective middle school required for transescents. Teachers make the difference. The better the staff is prepared to work with youngsters of this age, the greater the likelihood that the middle school will be successful. There are problems, however, in preparing teachers for the middle school.

A study in 1973 of over six hundred colleges and universities in the United States found that more than three-fourths reported no formal program for middle school teacher preservice preparation.[3] Only five percent of the institutions had a special program separate from elementary and secondary preparation programs. Most of the remaining colleges with programs reported that middle school teacher preparation was subsumed under either the elementary or secondary school programs.

Other research reported that only seven states and the District of Columbia have special certification requirements and code language for middle school-junior high. Of these, only one, Florida, is entirely mandatory. The remaining seven have overlapping elementary and secondary certificates for varying grade combinations in the middle, with a separate middle school-junior high certificate being optional. Generally, the remaining 43 states have elementary K-8 and secondary 6-12 or 7-12 certificates, thus overlapping the grades in the middle and ignoring special needs and requirements for middle school/junior high teachers.

If the middle school is to fulfill its function of providing a transescent-oriented program, teacher education must be aimed at the specific competencies needed by middle school teachers. Perhaps the best list of the competencies required for effective middle school teaching is the following, developed in the state of Florida:

The proficient middle school teacher—

1. Shows awareness of his or her own behavior patterns and how they are influenced by situations and by his or her beliefs; awareness of personality characteristics; acceptance of a variety of behavior in others that differs from his or her own.

2. Interacts constructively with other adults and with transescents; shows regard for persons; is approachable, responsive, and supportive.

[3] Thomas Gatewood and Robert Mills. *A Study of the Junior High / Middle School Teacher Preparatory Programs of Colleges and Universities in the United States.* Mount Pleasant, Michigan: Central Michigan University, 1973.

3. Understands the physical development process of the transescent student and organizes his or her teaching according to that process.

4. Understands the intellectual developmental process of the transescent student and organizes his or her teaching according to that process.

5. Understands the socio-emotional developmental process of the transescent student and organizes his or her teaching according to that process.

6. Understands the career developmental process of the transescent student and organizes his or her teaching according to that process.

7. Understands and applies various theories of the teaching-learning process; analyzes the learning patterns of individual students, prescribes for these and evaluates results.

8. Incorporates a knowledge of group dynamics in his or her teaching and helps students understand group process, group decision making, leadership skills, and peer influence.

9. Promotes positive relationships between the school and the community, between the teacher and parents, and between various subcultures in the school.

10. Organizes curriculum plans and opportunities appropriate to the middle school (those that facilitate the developmental tasks of transescence and are responsive to community problems).

11. Uses appropriate procedures of managing an instructional program—designing, conducting, evaluating, and revising curriculum and instruction.

12. Makes effective presentations using appropriate media.

13. Deals effectively with unusual classroom problems.

14. Counsels individual students, promoting self-direction through indirect guidance.

15. Helps students to consider alternative values and to develop personal workable valuing systems.

16. Teaches students techniques of problem solving.

17. Provides opportunities and guidance to help students become independent learners (define own goals and problems, identify resources, and evaluate outcomes).

18. Designs and conducts group activities according to the kinds of learnings that are facilitated by the different groupings.

19. Has skills of working in cooperative teaching situations—with other teachers, paraprofessionals, and resource persons.

20. Accepts responsibility of multidisciplinary instruction; plans thematic and coordinated studies with other teachers; and assists them in teaching subjects outside of his or her own area of specialization.

To develop these competencies, major changes in preservice teacher preparation programs are called for at the university level since, as noted previously, few colleges have formal programs to prepare middle school teachers, and few states require middle school teacher certification.

An effective middle school teacher preparation program at the university undergraduate level should include the following components. The program should:

1. Be field-centered; that is, carried out in actual middle school classrooms.

2. Be competency-based, with focus on the development of necessary and observable competencies considered significant for the middle school teacher. However, the desired competencies should not be narrowly and rigidly defined nor should they be related primarily to subject matter at the expense of child-centered orientations.

3. Involve teaching candidates with actual pupils and classrooms in the first year and in the succeeding years as often as possible.

4. Involve all schools and departments in the university concerned with teacher education and also middle school educators in the field in an integrated, coordinated, and long-term program to prepare middle school teachers effectively.

5. Include a variety of opportunities for experiences in such areas as principles and methods of reading in the content areas for the middle school, characteristics of the emerging adolescent pupil, guidance approaches for middle school teachers, and general principles and methods of teaching in the middle school.

6. Involve preparation in related teaching fields or logical combinations, such as math-science, English-social studies, and related or unified arts.

7. Include field-centered laboratory experiences in tutoring, micro-teaching, observation, and a full-time internship.

Approaching the improvement of middle school education through preservice education is definitely long-term in scope. To bring educators to the awareness stage, develop and implement new programs, and then wait until teacher products of such programs can move into and significantly affect actual middle schools will take years to accomplish. The task seems almost overwhelming, but we must be patient because the middle concept will never be successfully achieved unless future middle school teachers are markedly different from their present-day counterparts.

Until preservice preparation programs can supply teachers in sufficient numbers to have an effect upon middle school programs, local middle school administrative leaders must rely on in-service education to develop their staffs. Too many schools are highly unsystematic and thus ineffective in planning and implementing in-service programs. The usual pattern is to release teachers for two or three well-spaced days during the school year for in-service purposes. Frequently, for a given in-service day, a consultant may be called in to conduct a workshop, or teachers may visit innovative and exemplary school programs in the area, or they might simply have a "get-caught-up" day to clear their desks of routine administrative and instructional responsibilities.

All too often, there is no relationship among the in-service days of a single school. Even if the in-service day is particularly successful in stimulating new ideas and motivating teachers to

improve themselves, there may be no follow-up effort and teacher enthusiasm soon ebbs. Thus, it is not surprising that in-service education is looked upon by many teachers as a lark or an ineffective waste of time.

Several suggestions are presented which can be used by local middle school administrators to improve the effectiveness of in-service programs:

1. The program should be long-term in scope and tied to specific problems, needs, and planned changes within the school. Every in-service program should have an intended payoff in terms of accomplished improvements in the curricular-instructional-organizational-administrative structure of the school.

2. Teachers should be given time, support, and credit (if they wish) for in-service activities.

3. Establish an in-service steering committee to plan, conduct, and evaluate all in-service activities. Teacher involvement and leadership on this committee are critical to an in-service program's success.

4. Use outside consultants carefully. Before employing a consultant, first have worked out your long-term in-service goals. Then provide very specific directions as to expected role and contributions in the overall program.

The middle school administrator is the most important single person in setting the climate and overall attitude of the school. The administrator should be a teacher—first, last, and always. Some of the major responsibilities of the middle school administrator should be:

1. Establishing and participating within a structure for curricular and instructional renewal and change. Assisting in the planning, development, and implementation of an in-service program for staff development is one of the administrator's most important responsibilities.

2. Relating to and having a sincere personal interest in students. This involves associating with and being present with students on an almost hourly basis, showing a genuine

interest in them in the classroom, in student activities, through an "open-door policy," and in the lunchroom and on the playground. Insights gained from these contacts are invaluable in guiding curricular and staff improvements.

3. Maintaining direct relations with the school parents, and the community, through strategies such as:

Small-group meetings, perhaps neighborhood coffees, in which the school's program is explained by teachers in pupil terms, *not* just before a tax referendum.

Orientation programs for students and their parents.

Periodic newsletters and press releases.

Parent volunteers and aides—solicit parent support as tutors, as teachers in exploratory and elective programs of the school, and as aides in explaining the program to other parents.

4. Planning and directing a continuing evaluation of the school program, a responsibility most often overlooked and neglected by many middle school administrators.

How Can State Departments of Education, Universities, and Professional Organizations Ensure Quality Programs for Middle Schools?

One of the most important contributions state departments of education and universities can provide is that of assisting in the development of qualified staff for middle schools.

What role can state departments of education play in teacher preparation? Middle school administrators face a yearly dilemma in endeavoring to obtain qualified middle school teachers. The reason is related to the previously described absence of formal university middle school teacher preparation programs. Many universities would develop new programs; however, declining student enrollments and sharp retrenchments of finances and resources prevent them from doing so. Therefore, the main incentive for developing new programs may have to be mandates from state departments of education. The need for special certification for middle school teachers is admittedly controversial. Some see a middle school certificate as limiting a teacher's opportunities for employment.

It is true that the quality of a school's program is a reflection and extension of the building administrator's philosophy and personality. Yet how much more effective might that administrator be if given a staff of dedicated and specially prepared middle school teachers! Statewide standards are needed for dissemination of the middle school concept throughout an entire state. Florida is the only state in the nation which has to date launched a widespread effort to retrain middle school teachers. There mandatory state middle school certification forced universities and school districts to participate cooperatively in pre- and in-service programs for teachers. Until that time, the middle school movement in Florida was, as it is presently in the other 49 states, quite spotty and localized.

In addition to preservice teacher preparation and certification, universities and state departments of education can provide a host of ancillary services in such areas as in-service staff development, resource materials, and research.

National and state middle school organizations are providing an important leadership role in the development of middle schools. The National Middle School Association presently has members in most of the states, publishes the quarterly *Middle School Journal*, holds an annual conference, and disseminates information about current trends in middle school education. At the state and regional levels there are many organizations, such as those serving Indiana, Florida, Michigan, Ohio, Georgia, Maryland, Arkansas, and the New England States.

What Should Be the Relationship Between the Community and the Middle School?

Community members must be involved in planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating a program that will best meet the individual and group needs of emerging adolescents. Lay expertise is needed to identify the characteristics of the contemporary society the school is serving, thereby enhancing both the value and the public acceptance of the curriculum. Lay public participation by means of an advisory committee will

help to incorporate community input into the reorganizing of the program for emerging adolescents.

Another implication for involving lay participation is to take advantage of the resource people available in most communities. Using their expertise in their chosen field of interest not only will give them a feeling of ownership in the school, but may provide opportunities for excellent learning experiences for the emerging adolescent.

Planning the program for middle school learners necessitates involvement of lay people since the school is really "their school." Their involvement will stimulate local initiative, influence change, improve the quality of education, and provide a greater understanding of what is really happening. A reorganized program is more readily accepted by the community when its members are involved in its development.

Conclusion

This position paper has identified the purposes and underlying rationale of the American middle school; outlined what its program should be—curricular, instructional, and organizational-administrative; and presented some of the leadership implications for effective middle school programs. Hopefully, the paper will assist middle schools in achieving organizational, curricular, and philosophical identities of their own as distinct from both elementary and secondary schools. The middle school can remain as it is now, simply a new name and an assemblage of grades. Far better, though, that it mature into a sound school organization with a program built upon the developmental characteristics and needs of emerging adolescents. The destiny of the middle school is clearly within the hands of its leaders.

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